

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 L-03

SS-20 NEA-11 AID-20 MC-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 IGA-02 NSC-10

ACDA-19 DRC-01 /126 W

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R 081435Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4429

INFO SECDEF/ISA/DSAA/WASHDC

CNO/OP-63 WASHDC

USCINCEUR/ECJ7-PMS/VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 759

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TS

SUBJECT: AIRCRAFT FOR TUNISIA

REF: A. STATE 023541

B. TUNIS 623

C. TUNIS 643

D. TUNIS 579

1. INFO FROM NAVY THAT GOT HAS OFFICIALLY REQUESTED BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS FOR PURCHASE 14 A4C AIRCRAFT WITH CONFIGURATION TO INCLUDE INSTALLATION OF STATIONS 4 AND 5 FOR SIDEWINDER MISSILES IS CORRECT. PURCHASE OF A4CS HAVE HIGHEST PRIORITY AT GOT MINISTRY OF DEFENSE (MOD) FOR FMS. NEGOTIATIONS ARE CURRENTLY STALLED, HOWEVER, PENDING RECEIPT OF CONTRACTOR COSTS ESTIMATES AND AVAILABILITY FMS CREDITS. COST ESTIMATES HAVE BEEN REQUESTED. QUESTION OF PURCHASE OF SIDEWINDER HAS NOT YET BEEN DISCUSSED WITH GOT PENDING RESOLUTION OF MORE IMMEDIATE QUESTION OF FINANCING PURCHASE OF AIRCRAFT THEMSELVES.

2. FOLLOWING IS SEQUENCE OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO PRESENT SITUATION:

A. FOLLOWING DEPT/DOD APPROVAL IN JULY 1973, CHARGE IN-CONFIDENTIAL

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FORMED GOT DEFENSE MINISTER OF AVAILABILITY OF A4 AIRCRAFT.

B. UPON MOD REQUEST CNO DISPATCHED TWO REPRESENTATIVES TO CONDUCT INITIAL BRIEFING ON A4 CHARACTERISTICS AND PRICES IN AUGUST.

C. FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATION OF BRIEFING TEAM, GOT REQUESTED AN INITIAL SITE SURVEY WHICH WAS CONDUCTED BY A FOURTEEN MAN TEAM FROM DEPT. OF NAVY IN SEPTEMBER. TEAM FURNISHED TUNISIAN AIR FORCE (TAF) WITH TECHNICAL REPORT INCLUDING CONFIGURATION DATA AND SUPPORT FACILITIES

REQUIRED. INITIAL COST ESTIMATES FOR 10 RECONDITIONED A4C AND 4 AIRFRAMES FOR CANNIBALIZATION WERE ALSO FURNISHED.

D. IN NOVEMBER MOD REQUESTED LETTER OF OFFER FOR 14 A4 SKYHAWKS. HOWEVER, UPON FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH USLOT REPRESENTATIVES THIS LETTER WAS HELD IN ABEYANCE UNTIL GOT DETERMINED PRECISE CONFIGURATION DESIRED.

E. IN DECEMBER MOD SUBMITTED ITS CONFIGURATION LISTING TO USLOT. THE LIST WAS IDENTICAL TO THE SITE SURVEY RECOMMENDATION WITH EXCEPTION OF FUEL MODIFICATION ON ENGINE AND ADDITION OF SIDEWINDER STATIONS.

F. SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS WITH CHIEF OF STAFF OF TAF, LTC TALBI, REVEALED THAT ADDITIONAL PRICING INFORMATION AND AVAILABILITY OF FMS CREDIT WERE NEEDED BEFORE GOT COULD ACTUALLY REQUEST LETTER OF OFFER. CONFIGURATION FOR SIDEWINDER WAS RETAINED WITH CAVEAT THAT THIS WOULD BE FOR PRICE INFORMATION ON AIRCRAFT SINCE USLOT COULD NOT DISCUSS SIDEWINDER AT THIS TIME.

G. BASED ON USLOT RECOMMENDATION, MOD MADE A FORMAL REQUEST ON JANUARY 17 TO MEET WITH MADCONNEL DOUGLAS AND LOCKHEED REPRESENTATIVES, PREFERABLY AT DAVIS MONTHAN AFB, IN ORDER TO OBTAIN PRECISE COST ESTIMATES ON ACTUAL AIRCRAFT SELECTED BY TAF REPRESENTATIVES. THIS INFORMATION WAS FORWARDED TO CNO. VISIT TO DAVIS MONTHAN APPEARED TO US TO BE MOST LOGICAL MEETING PLACE FOR TAF AND CONTRACTORS SINCE RENOVATION COSTS OF SPECIFIC AIRCRAFT CAN BE DETERMINED ON THE SPOT.

3. RE POSSIBLE EFFECT OF PROPOSED TUNISIAN-LIBYAN MERGER ON A4 SALES (PARA 3 STATE 023541), EMBASSY HAS ALREADY REPORTED IN TUNIS 623 THAT GOT IS BACKING OFF FROM PROPOSAL, AND THAT ACTUAL UNION IS EXTREMELY UNLIKELY TO OCCUR FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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SOME TIME TO COME, IF EVER. ANY JOINT OPERATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES WHICH MIGHT NEVERTHELESS EVOLVE IN CERTAIN SECTORS OVER THE COMING YEARS WILL ALMOST DEFINITELY NOT INCLUDE THE MILITARY. REASON FOR THIS IS THAT GOT SCRUPULOUSLY ADHERES TO POLICY OF KEEPING TUNISIAN MILITARY SMALL, RELATIVELY INCONSPICUOUS AND ENTIRELY SUBORDINATE TO CIVILIAN CONTROL. TUNISIANS WOULD BE WARY OF ANY DEVELOPMENT WHICH FACILITATES ENCROACHMENT INTO TUNISIA

OF LIBYAN MILITARY, WHOM TUNISIANS KNOW CONSTITUTE POWER
BASE IN LIBYA. IN ANY CASE, A4C AIRCRAFT ARE OF NO
INTEREST TO LIBYANS, WHO POSSESS MORE MODERN AND SPHISTICATED
EQUIPMENT.

4. TURNDOWN BY USG OF GOT REQUEST FOR A4C PURCHASE
WOULD NO DOUBT BE MISINTERPRETED BY GOT AS REFLECTING
FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN USG POLICY TOWARD TUNISIA. SINCE
GOT LEADERSHIP CONSIDERS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH U.S. AS
ONE OF MAIN PILLARS OF TUNISIAN FOREIGN POLICY, ANY
SUGGESTION OF A REVERSAL IN OUR POLICY OF FRIENDSHIP AND
HELPLEFULNESS RISKS WEAKENING TUNISIAN LEADERSHIP. AT
TIME WHEN GOT TRYING TO BACK OUT GRACEFULLY FROM MERGER
WITH LIBYA, GOT IS IN PARTICULAR NEED OF OUR SUPPORT.
THIS CONTINUED ASSISTANCE INTER ALIA STRENGTHENS HAND OF
THOSE WHO OPPOSE UNION WITH LIBYA -- AND THUS REINFORCES
PROBABILITY THAT UNION WITH QADHAFI WILL NOT RPT NOT OCCUR.

5. I APPRECIATE STRICTURES ON PURCHASE OF SIDEWINDER
AS STATED P
RA 5 STATE 23541 AND INTEND
RAISE THESE
MATTERS WITH TUNISIANS AT CONVENIENT OPPORTUNITY. (I
WILL RESERVE JUDGMENT FOR PRESENT AS TO WHETHER WE SHOULD
TRY FOR PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION SHOULD THIS APPEAR
DESIRABLE.) I DO NOT ANTICIPATE MOMENT FOR TALKING WITH
TUNISIANS WILL COME, HOWEVER, UNTIL WE HAVE PRICING INFO
ON A4S THEMSELVES (WITH SIDEWINDER CONFIGURATION) AND
AVAILABILITY FMS CREDITS FOR TUNISIA. PREFER NOT TO
DISCOURAGE PURCHASE OF A4S BY MUDDYING WATERS WITH PROBLEMS
OF SIDEWINDERS, WHICH WE CONSIDER BE ESSENTIALLY SEPARATE
ISSUE. DURING DISCUSSION I WILL MAKE THIS POINT,
ADDING, AS APPROPRIATE, VIEW THAT TAF SHOULD ATTAIN
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COMPETENCE IN OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF AIRCRAFT
ITSELF PRIOR TO ATTEMPTING TAKE ON COMPLICATED MISSILE
SYSTEM. PROBLEM OF LETTER OF OFFER CAN BE DEALT WITH
AT THAT TIME IN LIGHT OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

6 ACTION REQUESTED: A(A) EITHER ARRANGE, THROUGH CNO,
TAF AND CONTRACTOR, MEETING AT DAVIS MONTHAN OR ARRANGE
CONTRACTOR VISITS TO TUNISIA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE; (B) AS
SOON AS POSSIBLE, FURNISH EMBASSY WITH FY 74 NMS CREDIT
ALLOCATION.
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